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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Press Briefing on The White House Summit on Malaria Abuja Nigeria December 21, 2006

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Distinguished member of the Press,
Ladies and Gentlemen

An estimated 20 per cent of the world's population — mostly those living in the world's poorest countries — is at risk of contracting malaria. Malaria causes more than three hundred million acute illnesses and kills at least one to three million people every year. Ninety per cent of deaths due to malaria occur in Africa south of the Sahara, and most deaths occur in children under the age of five.

Despite available and easily affordable prevention and treatment, malaria continues to kill an African child every 30 seconds, and remains one of the most important threats to the health of pregnant women and their newborns. Malaria is responsible for the death of over 300,000 children under five every year in Nigeria and causes 7,000 maternal deaths. Malaria's epidemiological, social and economic impact on Nigeria is enormous, clearly underscoring the need for a renewed focus to mitigate the devastating impact of this easily and cheaply treatable and largely preventable disease. Malaria impedes development; discourages inward capital investment and global trade; and generally lowers the standard and quality of life for already disadvantaged people.

The United States Government, on behalf of the American people, joined the partnership for rolling back malaria in 1998, and has been fully committed to the reduction of morbidity and mortality caused by malaria, supporting the initiatives with funds, technical assistance, and malaria vaccine research. In 2005, President Bush initiated a malaria initiative providing \$1.2 billion to support malaria programs in Africa. On December 14, 2006, The President and Mrs. Bush convened an international summit to create awareness of the need to do more towards reduction of malaria burden. The summit was intended to: highlight measures to control malaria; foster partnering together to give African children the gift of growing up; and mobilize grassroots initiatives to save millions of lives in Africa.

In Nigeria, the USG will continue to support the Government of Nigeria's malaria program in the following areas:

- Insecticide treated nets, with the target of making 30 million insecticide treated nets available to pregnant women and children;
- Pre-packaged malaria drugs to encourage proper treatment of malaria;
- Integrated management of childhood illness to ensure that a child is treated holistically;
- Supportive enabling environment to remove operational barriers and enhance supportive malaria legislation.

Finally, I wish to once more reassure you of the U.S. Government's commitment to the reduction of the appalling human and economic burden caused by malaria in Nigeria. USAID looks forward to continued and improved collaboration with all RBM partners, with the aim to halve malaria deaths by the year 2015. When that great day comes, we will be able to look back and count this gathering as a milestone toward a malaria-free future.

Thank you.